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ABSTRACT

If reading is to become a lifelong passion, teachers must strive to encourage in students a lifelong interest in reading, and to improve their literature appreciation and critical reading abilities. Research indicates that teachers must enrich the reading curriculum beyond the basic skills program if children are to learn to love to read. Such an enrichment program should provide time in the daily schedule for (1) developing interest in self-selected reading material, (2) oral reading by the teacher, (3) silent reading, (4) interpretation and sharing activities related to reading, and (5) parent involvement in the reading program. A place should be set aside within the classroom where reading activities may be carried on. The area should provide space for displays and audiovisual equipment, and approximately 3 to 5 books or items per student or a collection of 100-150 items rotated at least once a month. The materials should be of high quality, and related to the interests and experiences of the age group. Time should be given for the encouragement of reading and use of the center, and for responding to the materials. Finally, such a program requires a teacher who is enthusiastic about reading, knowledgeable about materials, and eager to help students develop interest and enthusiasm in reading and give them appropriate guidance in making reading selections. (A suggested schedule for a reading enrichment program is included.) (HTH)

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Enriching the Classroom Reading Program

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ENRICHING THE CLASSROOM READING PROGRAM

Introduction

If reading is to become a lifelong passion, rather than a passive activity reserved for school only, then teachers must commit themselves to enriching the reading curriculum beyond the basic skills program. Teachers must actively plan for the accomplishment of two major goals: (1) developing a lifelong interest in reading and (2) improving literature appreciation and critical reading abilities. As Harris and Sipay point out:

> ...enormous amounts of time, effort, and money are expended in teaching children how to read, yet we apparently have produced what Charlotte Huck referred to as a nation of illiterate literates. A successful reading program must not only develop children who can read, but also children who do read. (p. 515)

Charlotte Huck (p.25-26) and Jean Kujoth (p. 217) cite research studies by Irwin, Cazden, Cohen, Durking, Chomsky, New York University, and Roe which point to the effects associated with wide exposure to literature and books. Some of the important effects were gains in language development, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension. These gains were linked to factors such as: (1) being read to orally by parents and teachers; (2) availability of well-written materials; (3) time to read silently; (4) opportunities to self-select from a

'rich cafeteria' of materials; (5) opportunity to respond to what has been read orally or silently through a variety of enrichment activities, such as arts and crafts, music, puppetry, storytelling, and filmmaking; and (6) enthusiastic teachers,librarians, and parents who model reading in the school and home.

The research of Doris Roettger (pp. 451-453) illustrates the possible effects of a skills dominated reading program. The subjects of her study, when asked how they would help children learn to like reading, if they were the teacher, made four revealing recommendations: (1) children should have time every day to read their own books, even if they have not completed their work; (2) teachers should talk to children about their hobbies and things they enjoy doing, so they can help children find interesting books; (3) teachers should tell children about interesting books and help them build mental images of what is happening; and (4) children should have an opportunity to discuss books with other children and/or the teacher.

Barbe (pp. 19-20) discusses the research of Daniel Fader, author of Hooked on Books and Roeder. The findings of these studies illustrate the lifelong effect of the school's failure to develop a habitual desire to read. Fader's study found that one-half of the college graduates holding a bachelor's degree never read a book after leaving college. Roeder's research revealed that public school teachers have a negative attitude toward reading as a leisure time activity.

An Enrichment Reading Program

The message is clear. Teachers must enrich the reading curriculum beyond

the basic skills program if children are to learn to love reading. An enrichment reading program should include a special time set aside for leisure reading; a comfortable place to read; materials especially selected for the interests and reading abilities of individual students; and most important, an enthusiastic, knowledgeable teacher. An enrichment reading program should provide time in the daily schedule for (1) motivating interest in self-selected reading material; (2) reading orally by the teacher; (3) reading silently; (4) interpretation and sharing activities related to reading; (5) parent involvement in the reading program.

A reading enrichment program is not a program to develop reading skills, a basal reader program, nor an individualized reading program. It may be , however, an extension of any of these, and can be used with any kind of approach to reading instruction.

Initiating the Program

To initiate the program, a place must be set aside within the classroom where reading activities may be carried on, such as silent reading, listening-viewing activities, puppet plays, storytelling, writing, art activities, learning centers, and games. This area should be arranged to provide for displays, bulletin boards, materials, and audio-visual equipment. It can be both a storage area and divider to insure privacy. Restrictive rules should be held to a minimum, as well as anything else which might decrease enthusiasm for use of the center in self-selection. The addition of lamps, rugs, sofas, stuffed chairs, bean bags, pillows, and bathtubs attract children to the area and help to make it seem more open and warm.

A basic element of the program is the collection of materials. A rule of thumb is to have 3-5 books or items per student, or a collection of 100-150 items, which rotate at least once a month. This would include books, newspapers, magazines, and related audio-visual materials. A listening-viewing center should be set up nearby for use of audio-visual items. Materials are best selected cooperatively by teacher and students. The following considerations should be taken into account when selecting materials for the center:

1. Content should be related to interests, experiences, and emotions of the age group.
2. Writing should meet criteria of excellence.
3. Readability should be assessed in terms of the independent reading level of students by means of the Fry Formula, five finger rule, or grading codes provided by publishers.
4. Format should include an interesting cover, handy size, large print, many illustrations, off-white paper, attractive and uncluttered page arrangement.

Third, time must be given for the encouragement of reading and use of the center. This would include time for reading aloud daily, book talks, and various motivational activities designed to interest children in reading, usually carried on or implemented by the teacher. Time should be set aside for daily silent reading on the part of children and teacher in order to help establish the reading habit. Time for responding to what has been read or listened to is very important. This may be done through art, music, writing, puppetry, discussion, storytelling, dramatics, or filmmaking. In addition to responding, children need to have the opportunity to share with another child, the teacher, or a group of children, things that have been meaningful to them from the material read.

This is a suggested schedule for the program:

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9:00-10:00					Motivation (Wk I) Responding (Wk II)
10:00-11:00					
11:00-12:00					
1:00-1:30	Reading Aloud (T)	Self-Selection	Reading Aloud (T)	Reading Aloud (T)	Reading Aloud (T)
1:30-2:30					
2:30-3:00	Silent Reading	Silent Reading	Silent Reading	Sharing Preparation	Sharing

Four Times a Week for Fifteen Minutes Each Time

Reading Aloud by the Teacher (T)
Silent Reading by Students and Teacher

Weekly

Sharing by students - 15 minutes each time
Self-selection by students - 30 minutes each time

Every Other Week

Motivational activities by teacher - 30 minutes each time
Responding to reading by students - 45 minutes each time

Finally, there must be a teacher who is enthusiastic about reading, who is knowledgeable about materials, and who can help to develop interest and enthusiasm in children and give them appropriate guidance in making reading selections. Few children discover books by themselves. In most instances, an adult model, either teacher or parent, who reads, who knows

books, and who shares this enthusiasm with students will serve as a catalyst for bringing books and children together and for inspiring a love for reading. Charlotte Huck puts it this way:

> The one most important element in children's development of a love of reading is the enthusiasm of the teacher... Walk into any classroom and you can tell if the teacher really respects the reading of books. You can look at the teacher's desk or ask the children what book their teacher is reading to them. You can see what provisions have been made to have books in the classroom; you can look at the quality of the books and talk to children about the ones they have read. (p. 591)

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